

SOFIA UNIVERSITY ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES AND THE ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH/LANGUAGE THERAPY

STATEMENT

of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katerina Atanasova Shtereva

on a dissertation on the topic "**Oral language disorders as the main predictor of the occurrence of developmental dyslexia**" of Teodora Penkova Yaramova

with scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Tsvetanka Lukanova Tsenova

field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences 1.2. Pedagogy (Special pedagogy –
Speech/Language therapy)

1. Data on the doctoral student

In 2004, Teodora Yaramova graduated with a bachelor's degree at VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius". In 2014, he received a master's degree at "Paisiy Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv, majoring in "Communicative Developmental Disorders" with the professional qualification "Speech Therapist. Teacher of language-speech disorders". Since 2019, he has been a doctoral student at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" Sofia. At the same time, since 2013, Teodora Yaramova has been working as a speech therapist in various institutions in the town of Smolyan.

2. Data on doctoral studies

The doctoral student has fulfilled all the requirements and has successfully passed the exams and the required doctoral minimums. The doctoral student has also presented seven publications on the subject of the dissertation.

3. Data for the dissertation

The topic of the dissertation work "Disorders of the oral language as the main predictor of the occurrence of developmental dyslexia" is current and significant, as it affects pressing problems in the Bulgarian scientific space. The author focuses her research on the role of oral language in the development of the written form of speech and the emergence of developmental

dyslexia. The dissertation includes an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, contributions and appendices. The text is 160 pages long and includes 43 tables and 19 diagrams. The cited literature covers 276 titles in Bulgarian and English.

In the introduction, the author justifies the topicality and scientific significance of the topic. The scientific work makes a good impression with the fact that already in the introduction the expected and obtained results are described, as well as to some extent the contributions of the research done. In this part, the tasks and hypotheses of the research could be added.

The scientific justification of the dissertation is presented in Chapter One THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM OF SPECIFIC LANGUAGE DISORDERS AS A PREDICTOR OF THE OCCURRENCE OF DEVELOPMENTAL DYSLEXIA. The basic framework related to language as a higher mental function, the organization of linguistic processes in spoken and written language is examined. In this first chapter, the disorders of the language and especially the disorders of its development are presented - manifestations, factors of appearance, frequency, types, the concept of "specific language disorders" is also touched upon - essence, etiology, theoretical models, forms and signs. The theoretical presentation shows the in-depth knowledge of the doctoral student on the researched topic. Attention is also paid to disorders of the mastery of the written language and the manifestations of developmental dyslexia. The presentation would have become tighter and purposeful if it had not included the acquired disorders of the oral and written language, which are not directly related to the dissertation's issues. The first chapter ends with the presentation of the predictors for the occurrence of developmental dyslexia, emphasizing the role of disorders in understanding the phonological structure as an indicator of dyslexia risk. Here, the author also presents data from the researched scientific literature on specific language disorders as the main predictor of the occurrence of developmental dyslexia. I recommend a more accurate and precise use of expressions such as "фонологично процесирање" and their replacement with "phonological processing" or a correct replacement of imprecise formulations such as "sensory cortex to the top of the brain" /p. 12/ and "the most tangible aspect of language is speech" /p. 22/. On the other hand, it is good to present the newer ICD-11 in addition to the ICD 10th revision in the dissertation. There is a focus on the new classifiers only on page 44, where in fact the problem is not sufficiently clearly explained: "The division of syndromes is directly applied in the ICD - 10th and 11th revisions (ICD-10, 2008 and 2018). In DSM-V (DSM-V, 2013; DSM-V-Update, 2017), the distinction can be made by adding specifiers to the overall diagnosis of "learning disorders". The summary and conclusions at the end of the theoretical overview

smoothly lead to the next parts of the dissertation work, however, it would be good to have a more detailed presentation of the Bulgarian experience on the analyzed issues, since there is one.

In Chapter Two RESEARCH PROGRAM goals, hypotheses, tasks, contingent, methodology and methods of scientific research as well as statistical processing methods are described. The fact that the presented research has a longitudinal nature makes a good impression, which is always a bet for confirming the generated hypotheses and conclusions related to the first stage of the research. As presented goals in the dissertation work, there is quite a wide variety and ranking of those of a more global and more specific nature. Part of the so-called a global goal, which the graduate discusses, is "to contribute to the awareness of the need to adopt a generally valid practice for early diagnosis and prevention of disorders of written coding and decoding already at preschool age". This is a suggested/possible contribution rather than a thesis objective. The hypotheses correspond to the stated objectives. The tasks are formulated precisely and clearly, which led to the logical structure of the exhibition. Participants in the research were randomly selected 100 children from the fourth group of the kindergarten. In the second stage of the study, 36 second-grade students were included, of which 18 fell into the group of those at risk of developing dyslexia from the first stage of the study, and the remaining 18 students were a group without linguistic deficits in the first study. The methodology and methods of the scientific research are divided respectively in connection with the first and the second stage of the research. The doctoral student uses a developed Protocol for evaluating the language development of children in the 4th preparatory group of kindergarten, which includes 9 procedures. I assume that the research tool created in this way is in accordance with some scientific sources or is co-authored with the scientific supervisor. It is recommended that this be clarified. The methodological toolkit of the second stage includes, in addition to dictation, analysis in three directions - correct spelling of letters and their elements/legibility, writing speed, number of errors in the text and a Protocol for reporting information from teachers regarding the student's academic achievements. The work would have gained more if the methodology had been described in more detail and with specific examples, regardless of the presence of an Appendix at the end of the dissertation. An interesting component in the research is the acceptance and introduction of the role of "classroom teachers and teachers", which makes the results as objective as possible. The doctoral student shows good skills in planning, organizing and conducting experimental research. The statistical methods are described correctly, but in too much detail, which is not necessary for their presentation in a dissertation work. Since the study is longitudinal in nature, it would be good to foresee comparisons/correlations between the results of the first and second stages of the study.

In the Third and Fourth chapters of the dissertation - ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST STAGE OF THE RESEARCH (STATE OF THE ORAL LANGUAGE) AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE SECOND STAGE OF THE RESEARCH (STATE OF THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE – WRITING SKILLS) - the statistical processing of the data, analysis of the results and conclusions of the experimental study. In these parts of the dissertation, Teodora Yaramova shows good skills in presenting the results and interpreting them consistently. Since at this stage, in addition to the presentation of the results, their discussion is also aimed, it would be good to analyze the obtained results in a comparative plan with Bulgarian and/or foreign scientific sources. For example, such conclusions as "Nevertheless, specialized theory and practice prove that if questions to a sentence present a difficulty for the child, this is an identification criterion for specific dyslexia in terms of language realization." /p. 109/ should be supported by evidence. At the same time, it makes a good impression handling the obtained rich database and the ability to analyze and interpret the obtained results. However, I would recommend in future interpretations of these results to include additional statistical methods, such as Correlation analysis between the individual studied parameters in the two stages of the study.

4. Theoretical and scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation:

This dissertation contributes by empirically examining the effect of an important predictor (language disorder) on the mastery of written language. At the same time, data on the prevalence and gender distribution of specific language disorders and developmental dyslexia are available.

A strength of the dissertation work is the contributions aimed at the practice and practitioners in the field of speech therapy by revealing the precursors of dyslexia and orienting the specialists in the practice to timely support to limit the growing number of students with specific learning disorders.

5. Questions and recommendations for the doctoral student:

1. One of my main recommendations is aimed at a more in-depth presentation of the Bulgarian experience in relation to the investigated issues; reducing the volume of the description of the statistical methods of data processing and avoiding hasty conclusions.

2. How would you explain the presence of two children from EG /table 28 on page 142/ who have no writing errors and yet meet the criteria for children with disorders in spoken

language? I.e. how do you explain the results "the achievements of five students from the experimental group and one from the control group are above the acceptable limits by two indicators. In the results of six students from the experimental group, even the three indicators of the state of graphic coding are above the norms. 149/ and does this not change the ratio in the role of the three components studied by you in relation to the results found?

Conclusion:

The doctoral student shows good theoretical preparation and skills for organizing and conducting scientific research. The in-depth processing of the obtained data is the basis for deriving reasoned analyzes and conclusions, which have contributions in both theoretical and practical-applied terms.

On the basis of these conclusions, I give my positive vote and propose to the respected members of the scientific jury to award Teodora Yaramova the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

20.04.2023

Signature: